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ABSTRACT

One of the techniques a teacher uses to enable her students to write poems is to use a story as a springboard. Her students read the story of "The Emperor and the Kite" (Yolen, 1991), which tells about Djeow Sew, the daughter of an ancient Chinese emperor. After students engaged in brainstorming the story, they drew Djeow Sew at the beginning and end of the story. Through mapping they discussed how her sad face at the beginning of the story had changed into a happy face at the end. Students then used guided writing strategies to write poems based on the story. The following week they wrote poems based on any story they had read, using the steps for writing poetry that they followed for the first story. A clear understanding of the story can help students stir their imagination, stimulate their creative and critical thinking and widen their vicarious or indirect experiences. The procedures in using a story to write poetry have helped the teacher's students to experience success and gain confidence in creative writing. Several sample student poems are included. (NKA)

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Writing Poetry from Stories.

by Victoria M. Rey

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the College Reading Association (St. Pete's Beach, FL, November, 2000).

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Writing Poetry from Stories

Guiding children to write poetry is a very important task for a teacher. Before children begin to write, Harp (1991) suggests that they should have many opportunities to listen to and to appreciate poetry. Literature for children is filled with an enormous variety of poems that pupils can enjoy (Savage, 1998). They can listen to a poem with eyes closed and visualize in their mind's eye the picture the poet is painting with words (Hennings, 1997). After showing many examples, the teacher can lead the class to identify the techniques used by the poet. Then the teacher can show them how to write poetry as a class, in small groups, or as individuals. One of the techniques that I used to enable my students to write poems was to use a story as a springboard.

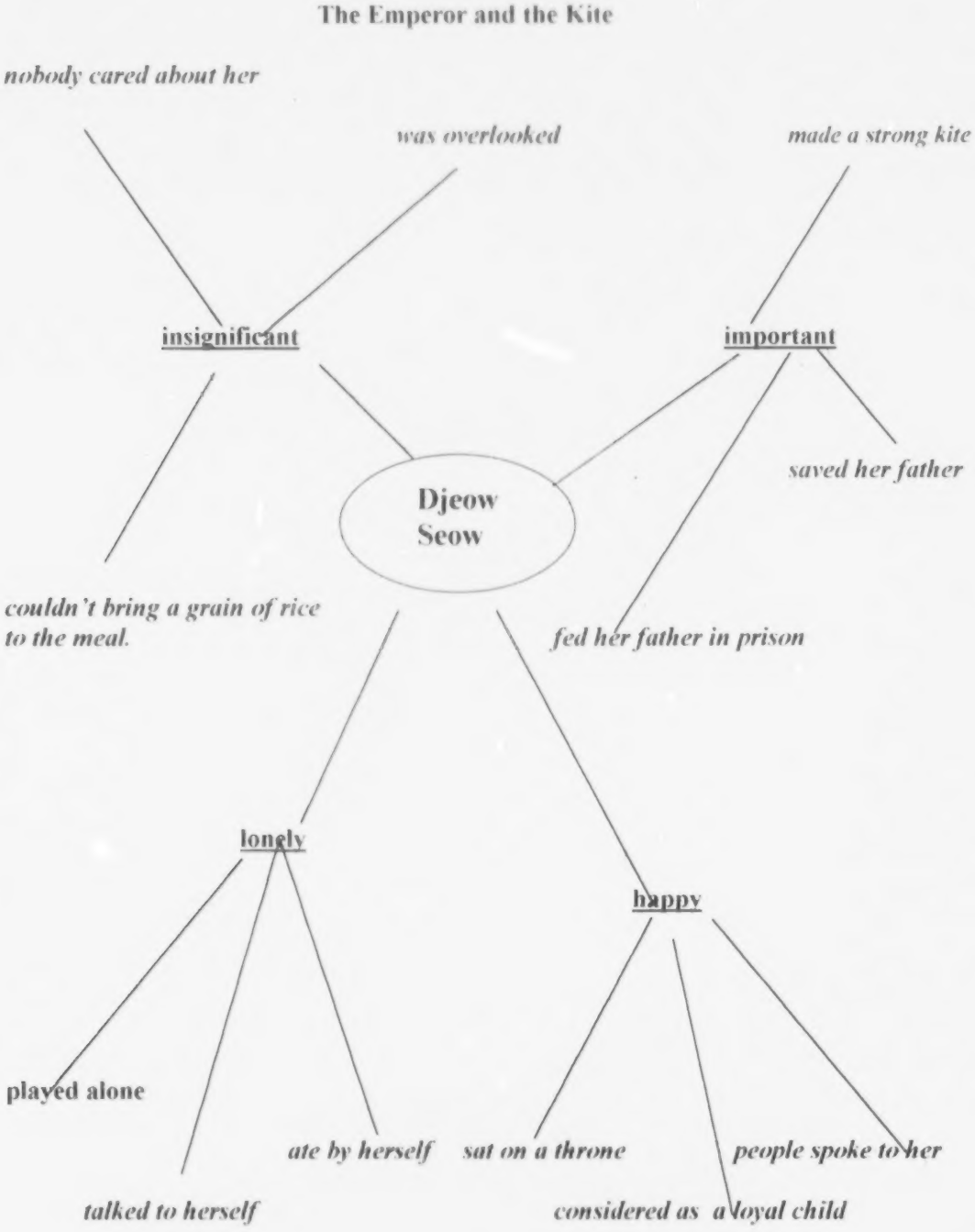
Story as a springboard

My students read the story of ***The Emperor and the Kite,*** (Yolen, 1991). This tells about Djeou Seow, a daughter of an ancient Chinese emperor. Her brothers, who were all older and stronger than she, were like four rising suns in the eyes of their father. Her three older sisters, who were bigger and stronger than she, were like bright moons in the eyes of her father. Djeow Seow, however, was a tiny star in the emperor`s sight. She was not even allowed to bring a grain of rice to the meal, so little was she thought of. In fact, she was so insignificant, the emperor often forgot he had a fourth daughter. Therefore, she ate by, talked to, and played by herself. Her favorite toy was a kite of paper and sticks.

One day some evil men went to the palace and took the emperor by force. Djeow Seow saw what happened. This situation, although unfortunate, had enabled Djeow Seow to prove her worth. Through the help of her long hair and her kite, she was able to save her father from the hands of the evil men. The emperor was able to regain the palace.

Mapping.

After brainstorming the story with my students, I told them to imagine Djeow Sew draw her at the beginning and at the end of the story. We discussed how her sad face at the beginning of the story has been changed into a happy face at the end through the mapping below.



After the students have completed the mapping, I told them that they could write poems based on this story. They could write from the point of view of the emperor, Djeow Seow or the kite. They could write about their feelings and the things that happened in the story. We discussed the steps below.

Procedures for Guided Writing

1. Recall the story and picture the different events in your mind.

2. Answer two questions or more from the list below.

Questions

a. What is the story about? The answer should present someone a clear picture of the important story elements such as characters, plot, and setting.

b. How do you feel about some characters or events in the story? Why?

c. What do you want to tell other readers because of these feelings? Why?

d. What do you want to happen because of these feelings?

e. If you were one of the characters, what would you tell to the other characters or to the readers? Why?

f. What do you think these characters would like to tell you? Why?

g. What is the message or theme of the story? What do you think or feel about this message? Describe these using your senses of sight, touch, smell, or hearing.

3. Write your answers by lines and/or stanzas in a poem.

4. Use the steps or techniques that you have learned in writing poetry.

5. Read your poem with expression

6. Revise your work if needed

7. You may draw a picture to help you express your ideas. It may be drawn anywhere on the page.

My students read their poems. They identified the point of view that was projected in their poems. The following week, I told my students to write their poems based on any story that they have read. I called their attention to the steps for writing poetry that we have followed. Some of their poems are shown below.

Sample poems based on stories

The Emperor and the Kite

A tiny girl made me
Who thought that she was worthless.
Through me her father was saved,
The more, she liked me.

I flew up and down
Brought messages and food
Through my long and sturdy tail
The emperor found his way through.

The girl's father who never minded her
Could not get his sight after her
For her noble thing, he could not forget
Until she was given a throne to keep.

Based on the story of ***The Emperor and the Kite***

By Luisa Arnaldo

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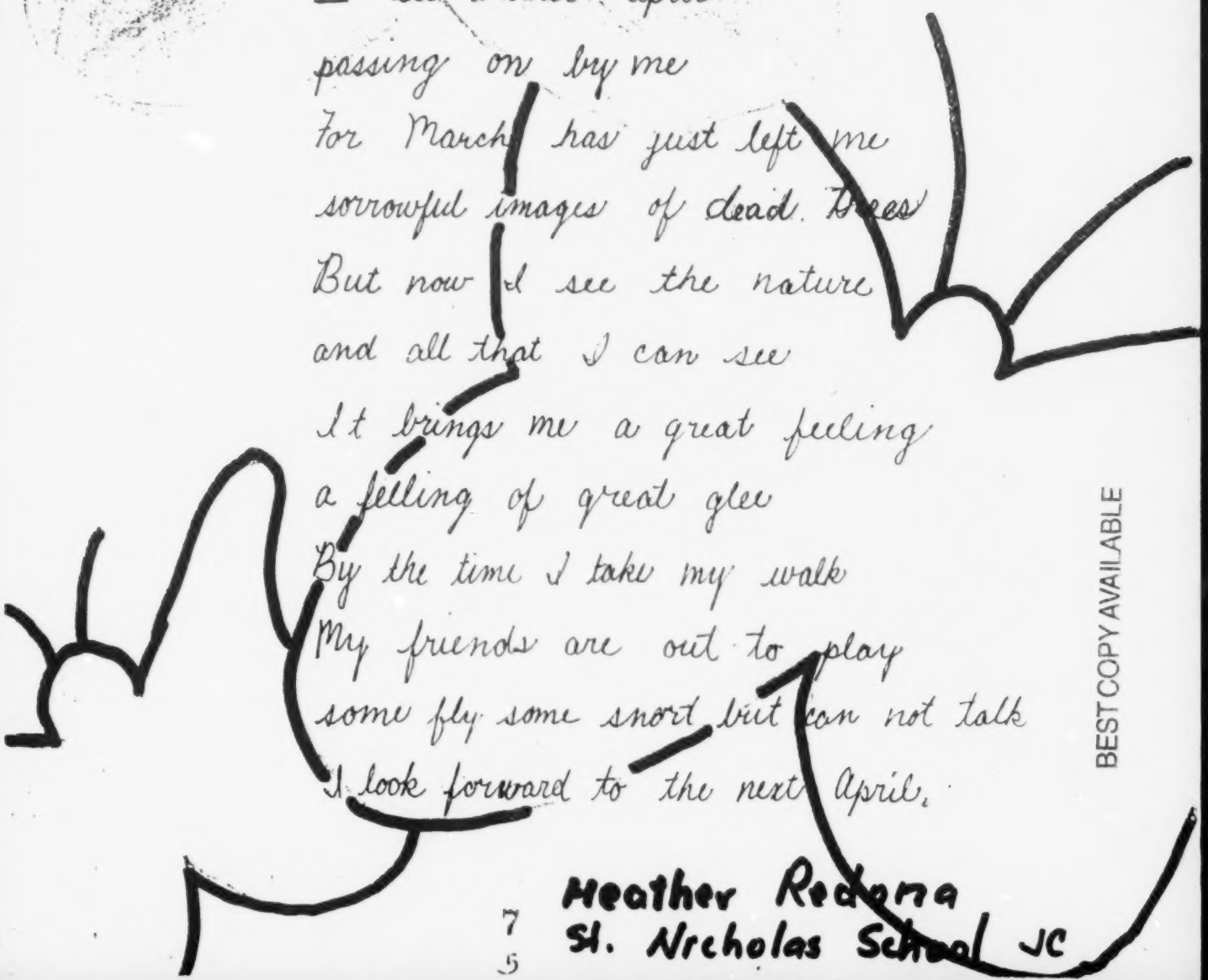
ANOTHER APRIL



I see another April
passing on by me
for March has just left me
sorrowful images of dead trees
But now I see the nature
and all that I can see
It brings me a great feeling
a felling of great glee
By the time I take my walk
My friends are out to play
some fly some snort but can not talk
I look forward to the next April.

Heather Redona
St. Nicholas School JC

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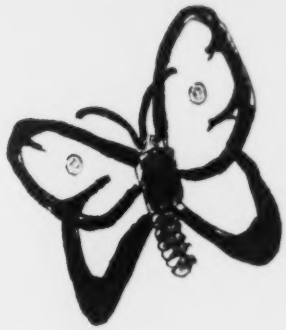
Another April



It's my favorite time of the year –
April is now here.

I get to go outside in the sun.
With my big & little friends for some fun.

I enjoy them being with me,
So I can keep them in my memories.

I never want April to end,
Because I want more time with my friends.

Please let April stay,
I don't want it to go away.

By Kimberly Liwanag
Grade 7 St. Nicholas School
Jersey City, New Jersey

LEAVING HOME

I love you with all my heart;
I can't stand it if we were apart.
Sometimes we may fight;
But if you leave,
I will see no light.
I know you have chosen the right path;
And I'll always remember when you made me laugh.
Today we must meet face to face;
Hoping the memories won't be erased.
I will say "I love you" for the last time;
Hoping you will change your mind.
Even if you don't stay;
I'll always love you any way.

Insights

A clear understanding of the story can help students stir their imagination, stimulate their creative and critical thinking, and widen their vicarious or indirect experiences. Topics of poetry should originate in the feelings and experiences of the children in the classroom, for it is only then that a child can write from the heart (Heller, 1991). Poetry calls on students to use high levels of selective and creative thinking as well as to express their emotions (Block, 1997). Imagining the characters' experiences and feelings has helped my students to write poems from stories. This guided them to write like they were the characters in the story.

The procedures in using a story to write poetry have helped my students to experience success and gain confidence in creative writing. They felt pride seeing their works displayed on bulletin boards inside and outside of the classroom. They were able to boost their morale further when some students won writing contests. Others saw their poems published in the school paper.

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